

and a picture of the bust ended up
as frontispiece.

the other night some girls who had somehow heard
about the bust asked me about it
and i had to tell them that the sculptress
had written me that she'd moved to phoenix,
opened a beer bar, installed the bust,
and inevitably the bust had gotten busted by a drunk.

but i got out the book of stories
and showed them the frontispiece.

"oh well," they agreed,
"it didn't look like you anyhow."

PEOPLE ARE LOSING THE ABILITY TO MAKE DISTINCTIONS

i would be the first to admit
that my daughters are probably
the only women i have ever loved selflessly,

but already unloved women are suggesting
to my daughters that, since i have never
loved other women selflessly, i can't be capable
of so loving them.

THE END OF AN ERA

dear brenda, i got up early and, as i had promised you,
i was at the sears store a half-hour before it opened.
there were already about three hundred people
lined up outside the tickettron entrance.
i recognized one of my students about a hundred people
ahead of me in line; he waved to me to join him.
at first i virtuously refused,
but when i noticed throngs of aging flower-children
cutting in line ahead of me,
i sidled up to him.
fortunately, the five girls behind him
declined to tear me to shreds.
at eleven the manager announced that friday was sold out.
by eleven-thirty, saturday and sunday were gone.
at noon, it was announced that only single seats remained.
a lot of people left. i stayed and moved close to the door.

by now my back was killing me,
from my having stood on one or the other
of my deadened legs, like an obese heron,
for at least three hours.
i hadn't had any breakfast.
my student had scrounged only one section of the
morning paper:
the letters to the editor.

i was ten people from the counter
when all performances were officially declared sold out.

brenda, i hope your idol, zimmerman,
swallows his fucking harmonica.

WRITE ME OFF AND OUT

My one friend tells the other
that he is thinking of opening a beer bar

and the second friend tells the first
that he could use a write-off,

and the first says, "I'm just the man for you:
the last restaurant I owned
lost forty thousand in a year."

MECHANICS

Although I'm nearly thirty-seven,
the man with the Texaco star
always refers to me as "Buster,"
"Skipper," or "Sonny,"
and once he called me by some name
so juvenile that these friends and I
still laugh about it,
although we can't seem to remember what it was.

Recently, though, from an article in the local paper,
he found out that I pass,
in certain of the less discriminating circles,
as a poet,
so now he asks me where he can buy my books,
and I hedge on that, because I'm pretty sure
my literary standing in the grease pits
is bound to be diminished
by close familiarity of the works themselves.